

Vision takes shape for Kendrick Park

By *smerzbach*, Created 02/02/2009 - 05:25

AMHERST - How Kendrick Park, the green space at the northern end of downtown Amherst, looks in the future could depend on the formal recommendations a committee will soon be making to the town manager.

After several months of research, the Kendrick Park Committee is finalizing a vision statement for the 3.3-acre park, acquired by the town in October 2006, and providing a list of goals and ideas for how it could serve the public.

Peggy Roberts, chairwoman of the committee, said that one of the challenges in completing the work is the competing information four subcommittees have brought forward since their studies began last May.

"We are trying to sift through a huge number of suggestions, consider concerns and leave a master plan of what would serve the community," Roberts said.

At a meeting Thursday, the committee developed a vision statement that outlines points of agreement on what Kendrick Park is and should be: "A new urban green space that is an integral and exciting part of a forward-looking and vital downtown Amherst, building a beautiful and green bridge between multiple communities."

The completed report will eventually go to Town Manager Larry Shaffer so he can begin the process of hiring a professional designer, perhaps using some of the \$40,000 that remains in the trust established by George Kendrick. Having this report finished will also allow the town to begin seeking grants and other money for taking the design from the drawing board and turning it into reality.

The subcommittees did extensive work on the recreational possibilities for the land and the concept of having it become home to a public market, as well as learning about the natural landscape, history and aesthetics of the property.

"Over and over, we're hearing it should be accessible and interesting to the community as a whole," Roberts said.

A characteristic the subcommittees agreed on is making the park multi-use. Any built elements should be designed to serve a number of functions, so that if there is a permanent farmers market during the summer season, this facility might also double as a performing arts space.

Liz Rosenberg, vice chairwoman of the committee, said Kendrick Park should be an attraction and a destination and could help to enhance businesses that line its East Pleasant Street side. But committee members also understand that it borders residential neighborhoods on the west side, and many others want Kendrick Park to be a place for reflection.

The committee's work has revealed a tension between the ideas of some Amherst residents who would like to see the property developed and those who would like to see it left as it is.

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